

15 Dec 59

THOMAS E. MURRAY



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December 7, 1959

Dear Allen:

It is my hope that you will be able to find time to read the enclosed address to be delivered before the Institute of World Affairs.


I would appreciate any comments that you would care to give me on my specific disarmament proposal.

With kind personal regards,

Sincerely yours,

*Tom*

Hon. Allen W. Dulles  
Central Intelligence Agency  
2430 E Street, North West  
Washington, D. C.

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FOR RELEASE  
5:00 p.m., December 9, 1959

SUMMARY OF

REMARKS PREPARED BY THOMAS E. MURRAY  
Consultant to the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy  
for Delivery before the  
INSTITUTE OF WORLD AFFAIRS  
Huntington-Sheraton Hotel, Pasadena, California  
December 9th, 1959

THE DISMANTLING OF THE ERA OF TERROR

During the past decade American armament policies have been disorderly, undirected by a clearly defined national purpose. We are now in danger lest our disarmament policies fall victim to the same disorders.

The first task is to define our national purpose in disarmament negotiations. The basis of definition must be the distinction between discriminating force, which is apt for political purposes, and indiscriminate violence, which is inept for political purposes.

Our purpose must be to dismantle the Era of Terror by dissipating the threat of unlimited violence that lurks in existent megaton stockpiles.

I therefore propose: (1) that an international agency be set up to supervise the destruction of American and Russian megaton weapons; (2) that the destruction be done on a matching basis, weapon for equal weapon; (3) that the process be continued until its political purpose is achieved.

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Nine reasons stand in favor of this proposal. (1) it takes more realistic account of national security than current American disarmament policy; (2) it goes to the heart of the issue; (3) it is practical, because its appeal is to the coincident self-interest of both parties; (4) it will recommend itself to world opinion and gain for the United States the initiative in negotiations; (5) it will put an end to the threat of unlimited violence as an instrument of politics; (6) it will remove from the cold war the false issue of "survival", (7) it will release military strategy from the control of megaton technology and end the fatal divorce between military and political policy; (8) it will embody in a limited agency the principle of international control of weapons and make possible further developments; (9) it will serve to stimulate the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency by putting highly enriched fissionable material at its disposal for peaceful uses.

It will be objected that this proposal will impair the military strength of the United States and expose us to the risk of sudden massive attack. Neither objection is valid. The first rests on a false concept of strength. The second mistakes the real risk, which is Soviet use of force, not violence.

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On August 29, 1949, when the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic device, a new era began in the long history of the relations between politics and force. During the ensuing decade the pace of political and technological change has been so swift that men are now beginning to say that we have reached the end of the era that began in 1949.

One general judgment of the era is becoming increasingly common. We now realize that the immense drive to arm the United States with nuclear weapons and delivery systems has not been guided and controlled by a clear and practical national purpose. In particular, five criticisms are gaining currency.

First, our armament effort has been wrongly subject to the domination of technology. We have failed to submit technological possibilities to the criterion of military and political usefulness. Second, the result has been an emphasis on the strategy of unlimited war, as exhibited in the concept of massive retaliation. Third, the further result has been a complete divorce between military strategy and political aims. Our dominant military strategy and its supporting arms look to the release of unlimited power, whereas our political aims, whatever they may be, are certainly not unlimited. Fourth, and again in consequence, in the very midst of the enormous power-struggle now going on in the world arena, our foreign policies lack the

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necessary support of force. Our military "strength" has degenerated into a mere capacity to wreak unlimited nuclear violence, which is politically useless; and this very capacity inhibits us from the use of limited force, which may be politically necessary. Fifth, this whole disorderly structure of policy stands under the final peril, which is a lack of moral sanction. It is against the dictates of reason that military strategy should accept the control of technology. Politics, not technology, is the rightful master of military doctrine. It is also against the dictates of reason that the use of force, which may be the necessary instrument of justice, should suffer moral degradation and become a sheer exercise in violence, which can serve no moral or political purposes.

These five criticisms are entirely valid. If I may say so, I had made them myself before their validity began to be commonly recognized. Taken together, they demonstrate the instant need for a new design of American policy, guided by a new vision of the public purpose of America.

The danger at the moment is that American disarmament policies during the decade to come will be characterized by the same confusions that have marked our armament policies in the decade that is past. We swung into action on armament without stopping to put right order in our thought. We have already swung into action on disarmament without stopping to correct the disorders of thought that have already proved so pernicious and will prove pernicious again.

The first problem then is to define the public purpose of America in the field of disarmament. The basis of definition must be the essential distinction between violence and force. This is a political distinction, based on a moral premise. By violence I mean the use of

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military power in such an extensive, indiscriminating, or even unlimited, measure and manner that its use becomes inept and useless for the rational purposes of politics, which are always limited. By force I mean the use of power in such a limited measure and in such a discriminating manner that its use becomes an apt instrument for the achievement of legitimate political goals. The release of violence is irrational and therefore immoral but the use of force, as thus defined can be rightful, depending on the political rationality and moral rightness of the particular purposes for which it is used.

The past decade has been an Era of Terror because over it has hung the threat of violence--uncontrolled, unlimited, both politically and morally absurd. Our immediate and urgent purpose, therefore, must be to effect an orderly dismantling of the Era of Terror, by dissipating this threat of violence. This negative purpose must be allied with the more positive purpose of effecting the orderly construction of a new era. One cannot give it a name or fully describe it. But its essential characteristic must be the reinstatement of force as an instrument for the basic political purpose that is indicated in the American Constitution, namely "to establish justice."

Given the nature of man, the art of international politics cannot dispense with the use, or at least the threat, of force, any more than human society can dispense with law, which requires force to back it up. On the other hand, international politics perishes as an art if power is allowed to suffer moral degradation and become mere violence, which is destructive of the very idea of force and of law too.

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This statement of the two-fold national purpose of America immediately serves to make it clear that nuclear tests are not the primary or most important issue. The past decade has not been the Era of Terror because it has been an era of tests. The current moratorium on all tests has done nothing to banish the threat of violence. This threat derives from the escape of nuclear technology from the control of military doctrine and political purpose. Here the primary issue appears. Technology does not know the difference between violence and force. Left to itself, without the control of higher policy, it has tended to enlarge our capacity to wreak violence, not to use force. Government, however, is supposed to know this essential political and moral distinction. And it is the duty of government, by political decision, to make the implications of the distinction binding both on the deliberations of the military strategist and on the experiments of the technological expert.

The primary issue therefore is a reform of thought, to be expressed in political decisions. Moreover, it is not difficult to discern the direction that political decision must take, if it is to rectify its own past errors and retrieve its own past failures. The disorders of policy in the past decade have left as their fateful legacy a great and ever growing stockpile of weapons of violence--megaton weapons whose destructive capacity is unlimited, if used in the numbers required by the current strategy of massive retaliation. We must assume that the Soviet stockpile matches our own. The sheer existence of these stockpiles is the proximate reason why the past decade has been an Era of Terror. These stockpiles have created their own strategy, which is that of war of annihilation. And the threat of annihilation has in turn created the terror.

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It follows in all logic that the Era of Terror will not be dismantled until these megaton stockpiles are themselves dismantled. This is the immediate issue presented for political decision. The decision does not fall to the strategist or to the technologist. It falls squarely within the province of politics; for it is an issue that concerns the public purpose of the United States. The making of this decision by government is the very condition for the restoration of politics to its rightful place of primacy in the structure of American policy. There is no other way in which the present rupture between political purpose and military strategy can be healed in its depths.

I should like, first, to present in general outline the form that this political decision should take, and then construct the argument, pro and con.

My suggestion has two parts. First, that an international agency be constituted and located on neutral territory and empowered to supervise the systematic destruction of the megaton weapons in the American and Soviet stockpiles. Second, that the destruction be done on a matching basis, weapon for equal weapon. The United States will hand over to the international agency one megaton weapon, beginning in the highest range; the Soviet Union will in turn hand over one weapon of the same size. Experts in the agency will be able to estimate, within a small percentage of error, whether the weapons are equal in their yield. The "hardware" of the weapons will then be destroyed in some public fashion. Their content of highly enriched fissionable material will be put at the disposal of the appropriate international authority for peaceful uses. This matching of weapons, one for one, will continue. The process has a political purpose--to end the Era of Terror, to banish the threat of violence, to redeem

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force from its moral degradation and its political absurdity. The process will therefore continue until this political purpose, under "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind," has been achieved.

Considerable detail ought to be added to this proposal; but the presentation of its substance is sufficient for the purposes of immediate public debate. I shall undertake to make the case for it.

In the first place, this proposal takes far more realistic account of the needs of national security than does current American disarmament policy. Our present policy was announced at the London conference of 1956, and it has not been changed. It calls for nuclear disarmament: first, by the cessation of all nuclear tests; second, by the stoppage of the flow of fissionable material into weapons; third, by the total destruction of all existing nuclear stock-piles. This proposal clearly illustrates our fatal habit of divorcing political and military policies. For political reasons we declared a moratorium on all tests, despite the fact that military reasons demanded certain kinds of tests. These tests would develop, what I have called, the third generation of weapons. They would be carried out underground and give us new types of much needed limited weapons, defensive and offensive, which could be used in discriminating fashion. Moreover, the other parts of the proposal, if carried out, would be fatal to any rational concept of American military strength. The program would strip us, not only of the capacity for unlimited and useless nuclear violence, but also of the most useful and necessary capacity to use limited nuclear force.

It is true that the carrying out of the present program was made contingent on the establishment of international inspection and controls. However, in the matter of tests it is clear to informed people that an adequate and effective inspection system, which would detect

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tests even down to five or ten kilotons, is for the present not a definite scientific possibility, and it is also, for the foreseeable future, a political impossibility. An adequate and effective system would have to consist of thousands of stations, equipped with devices not yet invented; this is the scientific problem. Many hundreds of these stations would have to be on Soviet and Red Chinese territory; this is the political impossibility.

Moreover, the stoppage of all nuclear production and the total destruction of existing stockpiles--stand even farther beyond the possibility of control for scientific and political reasons. Therefore, the first argument for my new proposal lies in the need to find a safe alternative to the extremely risky and altogether unrealistic policy to which we are presently committed.

In the second place, the new proposal goes to the heart of the issue. It is the sinister stockpiles of megaton weapons, and the strategies of annihilation built on them, which give off the fumes of terror that today are poisoning the international atmosphere. The terror has to be attacked at its source, which is the bilateral and balancing power of the United States and the Soviet Union to wreck the fabric of civilization in a matter of hours. These pools of potentially unlimited violence must be drained and dried. All other issues are secondary to this.

In the third place, this proposal is practical. It should be possible to negotiate an agreement on it between ourselves and the Soviet Union, the only two necessary partners to such an agreement. The single indispensable condition of agreement exists, namely, self-interest, hard and cold self-interest, the common and coincident self-interest of both parties. It is as much in the interests of the Soviet Union as it is in our own to avoid the ultimate catastrophe in which the Era of Terror may culminate, if it is not deliberately brought to an end. No national interest, American or Russian, is served by maintaining and increasing a stockpile of weapons

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of violence that are utterly useless for any political purpose, Russian or American. The political absurdity of unlimited nuclear violence--reciprocally acknowledged--this is the basic fact on which, as on solid ground, an agreement can be based. In the course of their rivalry for megaton armament the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. have both been driven into an absurd situation. There is a common interest in putting an end to it.

Moreover, the proposal is practical for another reason. It avoids the political stone wall into which other American proposals have always run. This stone wall is set up by the Soviet concept of absolute national sovereignty which forbids honest and effective international inspection of Soviet territory. A new formula has to be found to establish the principle of international control. The proposal I am discussing contains this new formula. It does not call for inspection of Soviet territory.

In the fourth place, this new proposal will inevitably find favor in the court of world opinion. This is what the nations really want--that the United States should take the lead in bringing them out from under the shadow of possible annihilation. The Soviet Union could not refuse to follow this lead without incurring the political punishment of the disfavor of the nations. Moreover, by making this proposal the United States would finally assume the initiative in the problem of disarmament. In all negotiations the party that defines the issue has already gained the initiative. We lost it by giving way under pressure and allowing the Soviet Union to define, as the primary issue in disarmament, the cessation of all tests. This was a grave mistake on many counts. We shall rectify it, and gather the initiative into our own hands, only if we ourselves define the real issue that rightfully claims primacy. This primary issue is the stockpiled capacity for unlimited violence.

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In the fifth place, if megaton means of wreaking violence were thus gradually to be destroyed by mutual agreement, the threat of violence would cease to be of use as an instrument of international politics. It would be absurd for a nation to begin surrendering its weapons of terror, and at the same time go on brandishing the threat of their use. Nuclear blackmail would be at an end. The international atmosphere would be considerably cleared.

In the sixth place, the essential distinction between the cold war and the Era of Terror would begin to be realized. The cold war had begun before the Era of Terror set in; it will continue after the terror is ended. Basically, the cold war is a crisis in civilization. The contest is between opposed conceptions of the nature of man, his role in history, and his relation to the state. This ideological conflict has carried over into the field of politics; and its economic dimension is continually growing. During the Era of Terror it has also acquired a military dimension of altogether swollen proportions. Until this military dimension is cut down to proper size, the real issues in the cold war will be obscured.

In particular, it is absolutely necessary to remove from the cold war the issue of sheer physical survival. This issue has done nothing but darken counsel, paralyze purpose, and confuse policy. The issue is fundamentally false; survival should never be an issue in political struggles or even in war. But a nightmarish sort of reality attaches to the issue of survival because of the megaton stockpiles whose use would imperil the survival of everybody. Until these weapons are destroyed, the issue of survival will continue to distract the mind of America from its real job. The public purpose of America in opposing world Communism will remain blurred, undefined to ourselves, to the Soviet Union, and to all the world.

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In the seventh place, a most salutary effect would be produced on American strategic thought. At least since 1953 it has stood under the hypnotic influence of megaton technology. Its focus has been fixed on the strategy of annihilation. The concept of massive retaliation has held it in deadly thrall. The spell can only be broken by the political decision to enforce the primacy of politics and to begin an orderly surrender of weapons that are politically useless. This decision would compel the military strategist to take new thought. There could at last take place a movement towards increased flexibility in strategic thinking, towards a revival of the traditional principle that the aim of a general is the will of the opposing commander, not the butchery of his forces, still less the total destruction of his country and the indiscriminate slaughter of its civilian population. Thus military doctrine would find its way to rightful relation with political aims. The fatal rupture would come to an end. And with this change in strategy from emphasis on inept violence to emphasis on apt force the technology of weapons would at last be brought under proper rule and restraint. The tail of technology would cease to fly the kite of strategy.

In the eighth place, a step would be taken toward the positive goal of American disarmament policy. The distant goal, still far over the horizon of the future, is the gradual transfer of the right to use arms and to produce nuclear arms, to some new kind of international authority. A small step toward this goal would be taken by establishing an international agency empowered to supervise the destruction of weapons of violence. This assignment is very limited. But the new agency would embody the essential principle of international control of nuclear armament. The principle would have been publicly recognized in the face of the nations and extensions of it would gradually become possible.

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In the ninth place, a considerable amount of highly enriched fissionable material would become available, presumably to the International Atomic Energy Agency, for peaceful purposes particularly for the development of industrial nuclear power. This fact would give a tremendous and badly needed impulse to the whole program of Atoms for Peace. This development would have important consequences both in the improvement of international relations as well in the advance of economic progress.

Here then are the reasons in favor of the proposal. What are the reasons against it? There are only two.

First, it will be said that an agreement to match the Soviet Union in the destruction of weapons of violence would impair the military strength of the U.S.

This objection rests on a false concept of strength. I do not consider it strength on our part to consent to the current degradation of force into violence. On the contrary, it is weakness. Surely, it is moral weakness. It is a failure of the moral intelligence to understand what is going on, or a want of moral courage to stop this process of corruption. It is also political weakness. It is a failure of the political intelligence to see the absurdity of violence, and to see also the rational necessity of force, for the purposes of politics. Moreover, unless this process of moral degradation is checked by the courage of political decision, the result will be to continue and increase our military weakness, the weakness of a nuclear establishment whose political uselessness grows more and more apparent, and the weakness of a technology, whose resources of power are exploited without purpose, because they lack due military and political direction.

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It is becoming apparent today that we have been pursuing an illusion of strength along a dead-end road, the same dead-end road into which technology turned military doctrine in 1953, when the hydrogen bomb assumed control of strategy. Since that day our nuclear superiority has been lost. A balance of nuclear power has been established. In this new situation the strategy of ultimate deterrence plus massive retaliation and the megaton stockpile which supports this strategy have lost whatever value, both military and political, they may once have had in the past day of our nuclear superiority.

The conclusion is that we ought now to make some political use of this stockpile since it has been a military liability. Self-interest presently dictates that we trade in our great weapons of violence, one for one, with the Soviet Union doing the same, as a political deal with a political purpose. This act of self interest would also be an act of the moral conscience of America and a declaration of our civilized public purpose. We would give witness in action that we shall not abdicate the right uses of force, but that we do abjure the senseless uses of violence, because we understand that politics needs force, but morals condemn violence.

The second objection raises the ultimate question: Would the proposed action invite massive Soviet aggression and open the U.S. to defeat and destruction? Would not the Soviet Union "cheat on" the agreement in order to gain nuclear superiority in megaton weapons, and then would it not, at some given moment, launch a total attack on the U.S.?

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This possibility cannot be absolutely excluded. Here is the irreducible risk. No policy can take account of every single future possibility. Policy directs itself to what is likely to happen, not to what may possibly happen. Risks must always be calculated. On any fair calculation the risk involved in my proposal is minimal. Certainly it is far less serious than the risk involved in the present American disarmament proposal.

It has to be remembered that the distinction between force and violence, which I am urging as the basic premise of American policy, does in fact constitute the basic premise of Soviet policy. In contrast Communism is not committed to the political ineptitude of unlimited violence. The communist purpose is always to use apt force, whenever it is useful or necessary. Here lies the real risk for the U.S. Force is forever the servant of Communist policies. It will be used not only on the defensive occasion but also to further the success of the offensive move.

Therefore the U.S. must always expect from the Soviet Union the threat, and the use of apt force in support of declared policies. This, I repeat, is the real risk, the ever present likelihood--in fact, the certainty--to which American policy must address itself. This risk was disregarded by the sweeping three part disarmament policy set by the U.S. in 1956. My proposal takes it fully into account.

For the rest, there remains the outside possibility, the unlikely contingency, the tenuous risk that no disarmament policy, however ingenious, can absolutely exclude. Might it not happen that, at some future and undetermined date, in a conjectural situation of possible Communist nuclear superiority, the Soviet Union might conceivably threaten the use

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of total nuclear violence, for no very clear or predictable political purpose? Who could possibly answer this question? This is not the kind of guesswork on which present American policy ought to be based. For my part, I cherish the confident hope that, if such a threat of violence were ever to be made, the United States would be secure enough in other forms of valid nuclear strength, to have the courage simply to defy it.

Let us, however, come back from speculations about the unforeseeable future to the certain and seen realities of the present. The existent fact is that the real invitation to military helplessness and political defeat before the advancing forces of Communism is being issued by the present rigidity of the American posture, both political and military, that refuses to make the essential distinction between apt force and inept violence. The enforcement of this distinction points the only way to security, both for ourselves and for all the world.

I do not, of course, maintain that it will be easy to negotiate in detail the precise and concrete meaning of this distinction as applied to nuclear stockpiles. But I do maintain that this is the cardinal issue that needs to be negotiated. I further maintain that the necessary premise of negotiation exists. It is a matter of self-interest to both parties to agree to the distinction itself and to strike a further agreement to negotiate its practical meaning. Success in the negotiations is not assured. But at least success is a more genuine possibility and a more instant necessity in this area than anywhere else.

Nor need we fear that the guidance of Divine Providence will be lacking to us as we thus set to work to dismantle the Era of Terror, which has grown increasingly offensive to the moral conscience. The redemption of mankind from the dominion of terror is not alien to the intentions of God.

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